

White Captive

As sung by
Gene Silsbe
07-22-1941 Colburn, WI

The White Captive

At the foot of the moun-tain, A,- man-da did sigh, At the hoot of the owl, or the
cat-a-mount's cry. Or the howl of the wolf, in some deep lone-ly down, Or the
crash of some dead for-est, tree on the ground.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper. It features three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff is the title 'The White Captive'. The second and third staves contain the lyrics for Verse 1. The paper has some light staining and a faint watermark in the bottom right corner.

Verse 1.

At the foot of the mountain Amanda did sigh,
At the hoot of the owl, or the catamount's cry,
Or the howl of the wolf in some deep lonely down,
Or the crash of some dead forest tree on the ground.

Verse 2.

At the foot of the hemlock, the wild game was flung,
While above from its branches the rude hammock swung,
While from battle and plunder, each warrior reposed
From the toils of the day, till the evening should close.

Verse 3.

The watch-pile of kindles, 'twas fanned by the breeze,
Till the red embers shone o'er the evergreen trees,
And fierce was the look of that wild savage scene,
As the light o'er the face of each warrior did gleam.

Verse 4.

They brought in their captive, all friendless, forlorn,
Her face stained with blood and her garments all torn,
And she counted with vengeance each merciless foe,
And sighed for the hour when her sufferings might close.

Verse 5.

The pile was constructed, the red light did glare;
Amanda was bound with her white bosom bare,
Whilst around her stood gazing that merciless throng,
Impatient to join in the war dance and song.

Verse 6.

Then up steps young Alvin, the prince of them all,
His eye like an eagle, his step like a deer,
A soul who would scorn his own freedom to crave,
A sigh for her suff'ring, a tear o'er her grave.

Verse 7.

"Fall back," cries young Alvin, "your tortures forbear.
This maiden shall live, by my wampum I swear,
And tonight if a victim must burn at the tree,
Young Alvin, your leader, that victim shall be."

Verse 8.

So early next morning, at the break of the day,
A birchbark canoe was seen gliding away,
And swift as the wild duck that swam by their side,
Young Alvin and Amanda together did ride.

Verse 9.

At the close of that evening, a white cot was seen,
And the blue curling smoke o'er the willows so green,
And great was her joy, when she came to the shore,
And beheld her kind father and mother once more.

Verse 10.

Young Alvin stood by them, he saw them embrace;
His heart overflowed, and tears rolled down his face,
And all that he asked was protection and food,
From the father of Amanda to the chief of the wood.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 130, and HST

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:
Sung by Gene Silsbe, age 61, Hancock, 1941.

The Antigo Journal some years ago printed the words of this song as contributed by the lumberjack singer Dan Grant. His postscript stated "This is one I have had many requests for and it has always been a favorite of the old songs of the rivers and woods, although seldom sung. I hope that many of those who have heard these old songs will keep them in memory of those days when they were sung, and days gone by. Dan Grant."

The song was also a favorite of the Texas Cowboys.

The original was first printed in 1818 and was the youthful inspiration of Thomas C. Upham (1799-1872) who became a minister in New Hampshire and taught at Bowdoin College, Maine.

Editor's notes:

This song was written by Reverend Thomas C. Upham, and first published in *Columbian Sentinel* in Boston, September 19, 1818. (Flanders 258).

Alternate titles/related songs: "Amanda and Albin."

Sources:

Flanders, Helen Hartness, collector. *Country Songs of Vermont*. With piano accompaniments by Helen Norfleet. New York: G. Schirmer, 1937. "The white captive, or Amanda and Albin."

Flanders, Helen Hartness, Elizabeth Flanders Ballard, George Brown, and Phillips Barry, collectors, transcribers, and editors. *The New Green Mountain Songster: Traditional Folk Songs of Vermont*. New Haven: Yale University Press; London: H. Milford: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Lomax, John A., collector. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. 1916. New edition with additions. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1922.

McNeil, W.K., ed. *Southern Folk Ballads*, vol. 1. The American Folklore Series, ed. W.K. McNeil. Little Rock: August House Publishers, 1987.

Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.

K.G.